

# King Farm Homestead Task Force

---

*By Mark M Pierzchala, Rockville Councilmember*

Following are thoughts on the King Farm Homestead Task Force. This document is for discussion only.

## Purpose and Background

The King Farm Homestead was deeded to the City in the late 1990s as part of the agreement that brought the King Farm development into Rockville. The City's portion of the property is 5 acres. The property was declared historic by Rockville. It consists of the following (groups of) buildings:

- Farmhouse
- Dairy barn complex (2 barns plus associated structures)
- Garage / meathouse
- Sheds
- Residences
- Hay shelter

The historic value of the property is mainly as a farmstead as an aggregation of buildings.

In 1998 there was some work done by consultants and a planning meeting (including charette) in which residents, City Staff, and consultants were present. Possible farmstead uses were discussed and ranked. In the intervening 15 years, the buildings have remained unused. The farmhouse had had tenants from time to time, and one of the buildings is partially used by Bikes for the World. There is currently a proposed educational use of the farmhouse.

The concern is with the long-range viability of the buildings. Mark Pierzchala, Burt Hall, and Dick Stoner (Peerless Rockville) toured the entire farmstead shortly before Mr. Hall retired in 2012. Most or all buildings are structurally sound though all are in need of improvement and are deteriorating.

As the City owns the King Farm Farmstead, (and indeed preserved it from destruction), and as the property is historic, there is an obligation to maintain it and to provide the best possible means of preservation for decades to come. A point of view of this proposal is that only through adaptive re-use are the buildings most assured of preservation for the decades to come.

## The Challenges

The reason that the farmstead has remained unused is that there is a mismatch between potential uses, its lack of readiness to be used, and the amount and availability of funds needed to bring it to use.

## Considerations

1. The farmstead is a public park.
2. The farmstead deed to the City contains constraints on the use of the property.

3. The farmstead is historic.
4. There is no water or sewer to the buildings. Electricity is only to the farmhouse (and maybe a few close-by buildings). The farmhouse uses well water.
5. In the FY 2010 CIP book, the cost of renovating the farmstead was put at \$17,444,064 of which only \$641,064 was funded. From discussions with staff (before I was on the Council) there was no prospect of funding this amount of money. The CIP lists only general sub-projects.
6. The idea of a private / public partnership was explored in the last term. Three uses came forward as possibilities. These possibilities have since faded.
7. King Farm residents have a variety of views on the property. During discussion of the three private uses, concerns included traffic and smells from any agricultural use. Additionally, there is now a public garden (plots) on the property and these users do not want this use to end.
8. The City has stated a site for a parking lot, but has limited its size to 40 cars.

## Composition of Task Force

The following organizations and neighborhoods should be represented.

1. King Farm and other City residents
2. King Farm Citizens Assembly
3. Peerless Rockville
4. Heritage Montgomery
5. Mayor and Council representative
6. City of Rockville, Recreation and Parks representative
7. City of Rockville, Department of Public Works representative
8. City of Rockville, Department of Community Services and Planning representative
9. King family

There are other resources available such as Rockville Economic Development, Inc. (REDI) and their board members, and the State of Maryland with respect to private-public partnerships. The City's Recreation and Parks Department put together a very nice binder that has all known information on the King Farm Farmstead including information about deed covenants, previous studies and task forces, and land use.

## Purpose of Task Force

The purpose of the King Farm Farmstead Task Force would be to consider uses of the farmstead given all constraints on the property. There would be an inspection of all buildings on the property and a formal statement of the condition of each. A statement of costs to improve the buildings would be made. Possible uses would be discussed including operational costs for any City programs. The Task Force would present to Mayor and Council a range of options as to the use of the property.

## References

King Farm Parks Master Plan (1999)

FY 2010 Adopted Capital Improvements Program (July 2009)

King Farm Farmstead binder, City of Rockville